



Virginia Zoo Updates

Norfolk City Council Presentation
August 25, 2015

Project Update: ZooFarm Renovation



Project Update: Reptile Building Renovation



Project Update: Reptile Building Renovation



Issue: AZA Accreditation standards for captive elephant care and management have been updated

The Association of Zoos and Aquariums requires that each zoo holding elephants hold a minimum of three females, or other combination of sexes, (or have the space to hold three females).

AZA deadline for program details: September 2015.

Deadline for implementation: September 2016

The most recent data about elephants

The Science

Enhancing Elephant Welfare September 2013

A science based study that took a broad look at the lives of zoo elephants.

Showing us that elephants need...

1. Social relationships

- To be maintained in larger groups.
- Multigenerational herds are best.
- They need choices for interaction.

2. More exercise

- More space = More exercise.
- A climate that allows for more time outdoors.



Elephants in the wild

- Live in tropical regions of the world.
- Extremely gregarious, living in familial herds where social bonds are very strong.
- Females live in family herds all their lives. Males live differently.
- Largely feed on low quality vegetation = graze over great distances.

Elephants in captivity

- Elephants have been in captivity for 4000+ years.
- There exists a loss of herd and family units.
- Reproductive challenges.
- Conservation education value: In situ vs ex situ.
- Handling systems: Free contact and protected contact.



Zoos No Longer Exhibiting Elephants

- Seattle Woodland Park Zoo
- Bronx Zoo, New York
- Lincoln Park Zoo, Chicago
- Brookfield Zoo, Chicago
- Greenville Zoo, South Carolina
- Detroit Zoo, Michigan
- Toronto Zoo, Canada
- Circus performances ending



Virginia Zoo Elephants Cita and Lisa

A decision not just based on AZA management standards alone but what's best for our elephants.

Find the best...

- Climate all year.
- Space and husbandry program.
- Social opportunities.
- Amazing opportunity for their “golden” years.

We need to be proactive. (18+ Zoos affected)



Virginia Zoological Society Strategic Planning

Short term goals

Zoo Construction Projects

- Animal Hospital, Zoofarm and Reptile Building
- Zoo Restaurant renovations

Collection and Resource Management

- Acquisitions and De-acquisition
- Elephants: Welfare/AZA guidelines/landlocked

Long term goals

- Capital Campaign
- Next large project



Summary: *Doing what's best for elephants*

- Elephants are managed differently today than they were in the past.
- Elephants need greater social contact and relationships with other elephants.
- Elephants need the right climate and space to exercise, and for social interaction.
- Elephants are designed to have multiple relationships. The loss of a member of a pair results in significant welfare issues for the single remaining animal.
- ***Use Zoo space and resources for maximum impact focusing on Education, Conservation and Recreation.***